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ABSTRACT

Ten six- and seven-year-old British children were chosen for case study investigation of the importance of children's interactions with each other and with their teacher in launching writing through sustained speech. The school was identified by educational experts as one of the "progressive" or "informal" variety, where children do considerable creative work in painting, drawing, and writing. The school was also identified as using "language experience methods" in teaching reading and writing. Classroom observations were made from mid-February to mid-May 1980. A total of 43 writing episodes was observed. Specific warranted conclusions relating to the development of sustained discourse are as follows: (1) where small writing groups are allowed to work on writing assignments together, group interaction facilitates solo discourse and sustains ideas in the prewriting and composing phases of a writing episode; and (2) the nature of group interaction, where groups are allowed to form and work together in a class, provides significant variables in selecting writing modes and affects the understanding and interpretation of assigned writing. (RL)

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"CHILDREN'S INTERACTIONS IN SUSTAINING WRITING: STUDIES IN AN ENGLISH PRIMARY SCHOOL"

by

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Parke (1960), Meckel (1963) and Braddock (1963) and others have pointed out the dearth of research on developmental factors in children's writing and Graves (1975) has discussed the difficulties of researching the writing process by using classical experimental models and has instead promulgated the use of case studies in investigating the complexities of the writing process in the early writing of children. In recent research conducted by Graves (1980) Calkins (1980) and Sowers (1979) at the Writing Process Laboratory at the University of New Hampshire the focus has been on the analysis of children's writing samples, the analysis of context and the naturalistic observation of children writing in varied classroom environments.

King and Rental (1979) have proposed that:

> . . . children learn how to write as a natural extension of their desire to communicate both to themselves and others what they know and are learning about the richness of their social and material world. They hypothesize, discover, invent, correct, and approximate the distinctive conventions of writing.

Drawing upon a variety of theory and research in writing acquisition, King and Rental (1979) further propose three levels or "steps" which appear to be stages of writing acquisition: (1) The point at which children can launch an utterance unsupported by prompting, questions, and feedback; (2) The ability of children to retell stories on the basis of an internalized story structure; and (3) The ability to control the interplay between elements of their sustained utterances and what they understand about their audience, their situation and their intentions.

The researcher is indebted to Mr. Roger Kilsby, Headmaster, Waterbeach County Primary School, Cambridgeshire, England and to Mrs. Janet Ardavan, teacher, and her infants' class.

The emphasis in this report will be on the importance of children's interactions with each other and with the teacher in launching an utterance through sustained speech into writing. Emphasis will be on reporting summaries of the writing episodes and on the emerging conclusions or hypotheses. The complexity and length of the case studies and details of the inventory of classroom context precluded their reporting in a short space.

Procedures: The Setting

The setting for this investigation was one classroom of 31 children located in an English village school in the county of Cambridgeshire. The school was identified by educational experts in the area as one of the "progressive" or "informal" variety where children do considerable creative work in painting, drawing, and writing. The school was also identified as using "language experience methods" in teaching reading and writing and not emphasizing reading and writing schemes or series extensively in literacy instruction.

The Headmaster and the teacher of the class were agreeable to a proposed plan for using naturalistic observations in making case studies of children's writing. The Headmaster recommended the teacher as one who was interested in working on research projects in the classroom. The village school reflected the social structure of an English village as described by Blythe (1969). A large army installation was located on the outskirts of the village and the school service area as well. Of the 31 children in the infant's

class, eight were children of army parents*. From the thirty-one five, six, and seven year old children in the class ten six and seven year olds were chosen for case study investigation. These ten children were considered by the teacher and the Headmaster as representative of "normal" six and seven year old children. Children who were especially gifted, emotionally disturbed, or had particular learning disabilities, were not included.

Procedures: Data Collection

The data collection period lasted from mid-February 1980 to mid-May 1980. During this period emphasis was placed both on gathering case study data from and about the ten six and seven year old children and describing the context for writing which the whole class provided. Specific procedures used were: (1) the making of a description of classroom operations and activities including the teacher's role with all 31 children. (2) The naturalistic observations of the ten children while they were writing in their classrooms; (3) The interviewing at various times of the ten children as to their views of their own writing; (4) The gathering of case study data about the ten children through teacher and Headmaster interviews, school records, and observing the child in a variety of environments. The purpose of this form of data gathering and reporting was to show the effect of the total class context including the teacher's role and the role of social groupings within the class on the development of children's

*NOTE: In many English primary schools, children are grouped "vertically" in classes of five, six, and seven year olds. This form of grouping is also known as "family grouping."

writing. This approach seems particularly important in view of the fact that the children were working for the most part independently in an open, informal classroom as contrasted with a classroom where the writing and reading tasks would be structured by the systematic use of a specified reading or writing textbook with progress carefully monitored by the teacher. A description of classroom operations and activities was developed because the expectations for behavior of individuals in the class arose from the structure of activities and the work on class projects. Since each pupil felt himself or herself to be a member of this particular classroom's social world the norms and expectations of behavior from members of the class as well as the teacher very much influenced all of the classroom activities including the children's writings. As Leiter (1980) has pointed out:

> The talk we use to describe the social world is made up of expressions which are basically equivocal. The member of societies, does not experience them as plurisemantic because he is continually embedding such talk within a context he has assembled to decide its meaning. This context is indefinite in scope . . .

The Classroom and the Teacher

The classroom was typical of many English primary school classrooms which have been extensively described in American educational literature by researchers such as Featherstone (1971) and Walton (1971). In general, the work in this class was done around a center of interest or theme. During the time the research was done in the class, the centers of interest were Robinson

Crusoe, Noah and the Ark, the general topic of Water and later in the term, the Egyptians. The topics were all accepted by the children and pursued as a whole class topic, as groups within the class or by one individual child. Commonly the class was involved and the groups and individuals worked on different aspects of the theme. These were pursued for varying parts of the school day, or varying numbers of days or weeks. The time spent working on the project was generally flexible with some pupils using the greater part of the day, others using the morning or afternoon depending on what other jobs they had to do. Each child knew his or her assignment in the textbooks (language and mathematics). The basic pattern of organizing work done in the class done by the teacher. Each morning between 9:00 and 9:30 a.m. she would call all students together as a class and go over the various aspects of work related to the theme and set up the various learning tasks for individual children and groups of children. Almost without exception the children were given the option of drawing, painting, or writing each day in addition to other work. This is a common practice of developing work in many British primary schools as a recent study by Galton, Simon, and Kroll (1980), of more than 58 schools, done at the University of Leicester between 1975 and 1980, found there are six major teaching styles used primarily among primary school teachers in England. The teacher in this study was closest to the style described as follows by

Galton, Simon and Kroll (1980):

> It appears to be a mixture of the other three styles (Styles 1: Individual Monitors; Style 2: Class Inquirers; Style 3: Group Instructors). Since, in the audience category for example, these teachers have the second highest levels of individual, group and class interaction even though some of the differences are slight. They ask the highest number of questions relating to task supervision, make most statements of critical control, and spend more time hearing children read than do teachers using the other style. Style 2: Class Inquirers also engage in class supervision questions and spend time in reading while style 1 and style 3 teachers show a similar need for an element of critical control. (p. 24)

The Role of the Researcher

The role of the researcher in the classroom was as a participant-observer. The researcher entered the class in early February and made an attempt to develop a relationship with each of the 31 chidren and enter into their work on various projects they were studying. The researcher would stay in the room through the morning and usually have lunch with the children in the school and would often go back for the afternoon session. The researcher participated in various outside activities in the school, but remained with the single class for the total time spent in the school.

The definition of writing used in the study was similar to that used by Graves (1975):

> Any writing intended to be at least a sentence unit that was completely composed by the child.

In contrast to Graves (1975), there was no attempt to distinguish between two types of writing in this study -- assigned or unassigned -- since students wrote everyday as part of their

study of a major class project. No sharp differentiation was made by the teacher as to required writing and unrequired writing as was the case in the schools that Graves studied. Usually there was an expectation by the teacher in this class that any writing, painting or drawing done would be completed although it would not necessarily have to be completed on the same day or even during the same week that it was begun.

Observation and Recording of Writing Episodes

The definition for writing episodes was similar to that used by Graves (1975) e.g. a single writing episode was considered to consist of three phases of observation: prewriting, composing, and post-writing. (p. 230)

Forty-three writing episodes of the ten six and seven year old children made up of five boys and five girls from the classroom were observed. The children's writing was observed in the classroom and recordings were made of the children's writing whenever they chose to initiate writing activities. Approximately 220 hours were spent observing children either while waiting for them to enter into a writing episode or while they were at some point within a writing episode. The writing using a similar coding system as that developed by Graves (1975) (p. 230). Interventions were also recorded in the same manner as that done by Graves (1975) (p. 231) including the phase of the writing episode during which an intervention was made, the setting at the time of the intervention, the observer's objective and

observer's comments or statements. One major difference in the recording of the writing episodes in this study in contrast to that used by Graves (1975) was that since the entire classroom, and the way in which it was conducted constituted a context for all writing that was done in the class, therefore a systematic inventory of the class and role of the teacher was included in this study because the interactions of the class with the teacher and the various children in the class with each other constituted a unique context for writing in that class. In fact, the nature of the class projects and the procedures of writing which were standard in that classroom presented a total context for the writing that was done. As King and Rental (1979) have pointed out:

> Texts, spoken or written, are embedded in and shaped by the social/linguistic contexts from which they arise. It is through language individuals represent reality to themselves and express their personal meaning to others. Language is learned and functions in situational contexts which convey meaning to the participants. When children learn language, they are learning more than how to talk, according to Halliday (1975); they are learning how to mean -- to make themselves understood, which incorporates a social as well as a linguistic code (p. 65). All linguistic interactions, or texts, occur in an environment that consists of what is going on at the time within the dynamics of the larger social system, with the language learner/user at the center. Not all elements of any environment are important in a linguistic sense; thus, the term "context of situation" linguistically refers to those features that are relevant to the language that is produced. These relevant features are, according to Halliday (1973) are the "field of discourse" and the "mode of discourse." Field designates the whole setting of relevant actions and events -- including the subject matter and purpose of the speaker or writer -- within which language is used; tenor refers to the relationships among participants such as formal or informal and permanent or transitory (parent vs. teacher); and mode, to the

> channel of communication which includes choice of written or spoken language and subvarieties of these -- i.e., dialogue, storytelling or expository or descriptive writing.
>
> The social situation -- the activity, purpose, participants and role relationships, as acted upon and interpreted by the language user -- determine that "texts" spoken or written including the form, theme and selection of cohesive patterns employed. Understanding of the development of children's written texts, thus requires an examination of the context in which they are produced. (p. 249)

Graves (1980) has subsequently noted the importance of context in his recent paper, "A New Look at Writing Research." The context for the texts which were produced in this study was the classroom and the way in which the various classroom activities, themes and behaviors were defined by the teacher and developed through interactions.

The Context for Writing

The children's writing tasks in this classroom and therefore in this study were to some considerable extent defined by the teacher and consisted largely of (1) responses to stories read by the teacher, (2) descriptions of processes studied in class i.e. the water cycle; and (3) spontaneous pieces of writing which several of the children occasionally did. The organization of work by the pupils was essentially defined by the teacher. Each morning the teacher would gather the whole class together for one-half to three-quarters of an hour for the first activity of the day which would be used to relate the days' activities to the overall theme being studied and to set out the work for individual children and groups of children for that day. In

almost every situation the options presented to the children included drawing, painting, and writing, usually all three. It should be noted that the teacher carefully monitored each child individually during the week for language and mathematics assignments from the texts and for individualized world recognition and sentence building activities based on the child's language experience. Each child had assignments for the week in these areas. Writing, drawing and painting were used as ways of learning new concepts and experimenting with ideas related to the overall theme being studied by the class. The overall themes studied by the class during the time the research was conducted were Robinson Crusoe, Water, the Egyptians, and Noah and the Ark.

In the recording process, it soon became evident to the researcher that some of the children being studied were grouping themselved consistently in the same groups and that they almost always discussed their writing during the pre-writing phase, the composing phase and frequently during the post-writing phase. These discussions, it was noted, seemed to affect the writing process in various ways. Lucker, Rosenfield, Sikes, and Aronson (1976) have noted the positive effects of peer teaching, cross-age tutoring and interdependence in classroom learning. Wang and Stiles have also found that children can take self-responsibility for their own learning. Moffat (1968) has noted the importance of sustained speech to the beginning of writing:

> . . . the first step toward writing is made when a speaker takes over a conversation and sustains some subject alone. He has started to create a solo discourse that while intended to communicate to others is less collaborative, less prompted, and less corrected by feedback than dialogue . . . He bears

> more of the responsibility for effective communication . . . The cues for his next line are not what his interlocutor said, but what he himself has just said. (p. 85)

Writing in a similar vein, Britton has proposed that when young children write, their writing, "floats on a sea of talk" and that in the early stages their writing "takes on the form of a construct . . . or a performance." (1970, p. 164) In the course of developing this "solo discourse" Britton further notes:

> . . . at the same time, ever new fields of interest for him is likely to be investigated, explored and organized first in talk. The talk, as it were, prepares the environment into what is taken from reading may be accommodated: and from that analgam the writing proceeds. (p. 166)

In this report the data are presented which bear directly on the affects of the teachers role, the classroom context and the small classroom group interactions on sustaining solo discourse.

Sustained Speech and Beginning Writing: Data From Writing Episodes

Denzin (1980) has discussed the necessity of becoming a part of any interactional group being studied. The researcher, in this study, became a part of the class, sitting, playing, reading, and studying with the class. The researcher accompanied the teacher and the class through physical education activities, assemblies, and/or field trips. In forming and testing hypotheses, the researcher employed a rough approximation of analytic induction (Denzin, 1980) and the constant comparative method (Glazer and Strauss, 1967). Generally, an hypothesis was formed while in the field; that hypothesis was then checked against the next set of

observations. In that way, developing perspectives could be grounded in the data.

Representative cases began to emerge early in the period of observation when the researcher noted that during periods of independent work, certain children grouped themselves together while writing. Denzin (1980) has pointed out that:

> . . . when they are left on their own, young children do not play -- they work at constructing social orders. 'Play' is a fiction from the adult work. Children's work involves such serious matters as developing languages for communication, defining and processing deviance, and constructing rules of entry and exit into emerging social group. Children see these as serious concerns and often make a distinction between their play and their work. (p. 185)

In the classroom, the children's work was carefully outlined each morning as described above. The children were relatively free to move about and chose to work at tables in various parts of the room. When the researcher arrived in the classroom in early February, the social networks were already well established, particularly with the second and third year pupils (the six and seven year olds). The factors which appeared to be operating in establishing and solidifying the small working groups of three or four children were:

1. Whether the children were "village children" or "army children."
2. Whether the children were good readers and writers or not so good readers and writers.
3. Sex.
4. Compatability -- in the sense that continued participation in a group met the social needs of each group member most of the time.

In March, April and May, the researcher began to concentrate observations including verbal interventions and anecdotal records on two of the groups working before during and after writing episodes. All members of both groups were reading and writing to some degree with several in each group still doing invented spelling. One group consisted entirely of five second and third year boys, with a distinct group leader. The other group consisted of four second and third year girls with one boy moving in or out of the group at various times. The second group had no identifiable leader, but several girls shifted in leadership roles. One second year boy occasionally participated in both groups and was welcome in each group partly because of his facility in writing and reading. Because of space limitation, it is not possible to present the social histories of the groups during the several months of observation. The extracts of records presented here supply evidence for the hypothesis that group interaction including teacher-class dialogue, teacher-pupil dialogue, and pupil-pupil dialogue can assist beginning writers in developing and sustaining an idea in both the pre-composing and composing phases of a writing episode.

First Writing Episode

J. (the teacher) begins by asking the whole class if anyone has ever noticed any house on water. "Yes," J. replies several had seen houseboats along the Thames in London and several others

had seen houseboats on the Cam River near Jesus Green in Cambridge. J. asks, "Who has lived in Hong Kong?" Julie, Jacqelyn, and Georgina have, but do not remember seeing any junks or sampans. J. shows a book with pictures of sampans, and asks, "Do you see the shape of the little boats?" J. explains that most people who live in houseboats have very little money. This leads to the discussion of where you get money and J. explains that if you have money you must have worked to get it. In some places where there is no money, they use the barter or "do a swap" with oranges and bananas. J. shows pictures of a houseboat in Amsterdam. Carol asks how people get from the street to the boat and J. explains about the "gangplank" writing gangplank on the chalkboard. J. also writes "sampans" and "junk," and "houseboat," Jay describes houses on stilts and shows pictures of houses built on stilts. J. explains the dangers of water -- "you must wear a safety jacket if you go out in a boat on the water." Then she asks, "Do you know what a house made of water would be like?" She then shows a picture of an Eskimo igloo and in reply to a question answered that Eskimo hunters use tests when they are away from their igloos.

J. says, "Who wants to read the books and then paint one of the houses on water and then write about it." Everyone moves to tables to begin to draw, write, or paint. Clare, Bobby, and Martin are sitting at a table together.

Clare and Bobby look quickly through the book on sampans. Kay and Martin try to move in and see the book.

Clare: "I'm going to write about the sampans that sail on the water."

Bobby: "I'm going to write about the poor people who live on the sampans."

Martin: "I'm going to write about Hong Kong where the sampans are."

Kay: "Here's Hong Kong, we can see it on the globe (brings globe in the hope of being welcome).

Clare: "Take that globe away, we don't need that." (Kay rebuffed moves the globe and goes to sit a short distance away. She has tried to enter the group but has been rejected. Cora and Bobby begin to write. At this point Catherine who has gone off on another track altogether and found the book Three Little Mermaids brings the book over to show Kay.

Catherine: "Kay, let's write about mermaids."

Kay: "No, I don't want too. (Kay has moved back closer to Clare and rejects Katherine's move.

Bobby, talking to Clare and Martin with Kay listening on the fringe.

Bobby: "There are lots of poor people who live on sampans and junks in China. They don't have houses like we do because they're so poor. At this point J. enters the group and begins to fold a piece of paper in squares to make a sampan. Clare, Bobby and Catherine and Kay all watch and then work on folding

their pieces of paper into sampans. This continues for approximately 20 minutes when the group breaks for a "wet playtime." Ordinairly, the children go outside at playtime. On rainy days they stay inside the classroom -- a "wet playtime." At 10:50, the group resumes folding the sampans and they work until 11:10 when all have successfully folded their sampans. All then go back to their writing. Clare begins to write about sampans in the Far East. Catherine recapitulates the story she has read about mermaids. Kay has drawn a picture of a sampan. At 11:20 Bobby begins to write about the poor people who live in the sampans. He has continued to talk about the poor people who live in the sampans with Clare and Martin. The researcher asks Bobby if he knows how the paper will end. He says that he is going to write about the poor people who live in the sampans in the Far East. At 11:45 Bobby, Clare and Martin have finished their stories and have begun to illustrate them by drawing sampans and houses on stilts on the pages to illustrate the stories for their topic books. Kay has begun to write about sampans and houses on stilts. Clare and Bobby have continued to talk about their stories. By twelve o'clock, (lunchtime) Bobby has finished the following story:

The Sampan

> The poor people in China and other far east countrys they use the sampan and the junks because they are too poor to buy houses on land like us. Instead they live in the sampans and junks some of the people live in houses on stilts and they cant afford houses on land like others who can afford houses on land.

Analysis

In the interaction between the teacher and the class as the writing episode began, Bobby developed his idea to write about poor people who lived in the sampans. Clare decided to write about sampans in the Far East as did Martin. The ensuing group dialogue gave all members of the group a chance to begin to talk about their ideas with each other. Ultimately the act of talking to the others about his ideas helped Bobby to sustain the idea long enough to put it into writing. It took approximately 1-1/2 hours not counting various interruptions for Bobby to sustain the idea by talking about it (without the attention of other group members) until he could get it into writing. As Moffett (1968) pointed out above, Bobby began a "solo discourse" in a group interactive situation which he sustained for an hour and an half until he could get it into writing.

Second Writing Episode

At 9:00 a.m., at the beginning of the class, T. begins a conversation with the whole class about the Pharoah. "I want you to write today about the Pharoah. Let's think about what the Pharoah was like. For example, what did he wear? what did he do? Remember that we have seen him on the Watch TV (BBC) program. When you write, try to answer the following questions. What did the Pharoah wear? What did he do? And what did the Egyptians think about it? Let's talk about the questions first. What

did the Egyptians think of the Pharoah?" Several children answer, "They thought he was a god." J. continues, "Remember he had a job to act as a communicator between people and the gods. He had to pray for rain and against harmful things like plagues. What did he do?" The children answered, "He prayed." J., "What else did he do?" The children replied, "He hunted and he fished." J. "What did he hunt?" The children do not reply. J, "There are lions and tigers in Egypt. Perhaps he hunted lions and tigers. What do they have in the Nile river?" "Hippos and crocodiles," say several members of the class. "That's right," J. continued, "Hippos ruined the crops and were harmful to the Egyptians." J. continues, "What did the Pharoah wear? Remember that in the museum we saw that long cotton linen made from a plant called flax. The Pharoah wore clothes made from cotton and flax." After some further discussion about the Pharoah J. says, "Those who are going to do the writing about the Pharoah go and do it." Carol, Nigel, Thomas, Daniel, Gary and Martin all group around one table and begin to write. (This is an all boy group and Carol is making an attempt to sit with the boys but they ignore her.)

Daniel: (beginning to dramatize a hunting expedition) I'll be the Pharoah. You're my hunters (to Thomas, Gary and Martin). We're going along the Nile looking for lions or tigers.

Martin: We can't do that Daniel, we're writing.

Gary to the researcher: I can't get started.

Researcher: (Repeats the three questions about the Pharoah) Gary begins to write.

Daniel: (begins to sing) "A hunting we will go, a hunting we will go."

Gary moves to another table because Daniel is making too much noise. Daniel continues to sing while he begins to write his own story. He stops and moves into Gary's vacated chair next to Martin where he begins to read Martin's story and make comments about it.

Daniel: "Why don't you have him hunt hippos?"

Martin: "I want him to hunt a tiger."

Daniel: "I'm going to have him hunt a hippo from a boat in the water with lots of men rowing the boat."

Martin: "I want him to hunt a lion and a tiger."

At 10:00 a.m. Martin and Daniel continue to work on their stories and to discuss them. They are reading from the book Pharoahs and Kings which J. has been using.

Daniel: "Put in that the lions attack the Pharoah." (Daniel acts out a lion attack on the Pharoah for Martin to include in his story.)

Martin: "All right, I'll put it in."

Daniel: (Continues to sing "A hunting we will go" and continues a solo discourse on the Pharoah's attack on a hippo from a boat for approximately ten minutes. Then he begins to help Gary, who has returned to the table, with his story.) "The Pharoah can be hunting the lion and the lion can be hunting the Pharoah."

Gary: "I don't know how to write that."

Daniel: "First write the part about the Pharoah hunting the lion."

Gary: "I don't know." (continues writing)

10:30 a.m., Daniel continues to act out the Pharoah hunting lions until Gary complains to J. that Daniel is interfering with his writing. J. takes Daniel away from the table and isolates him in a quiet corner. At 10:30 a.m. Daniel finishes his story about the Pharoah hunting the hippo from a boat. J. explains that he hasn't answered the questions about the Pharoah and that he has really only written about the hippo hunt and this is only one aspect of what the Pharoah does. Daniel returns to his isolated corner and continues to write. 11:00 -- After playtime, Gary, Martin, and Thomas have all written stories about the Pharoah hunting lions and tigers and Daniel has written a story about the Pharoah hunting a hippo from a boat. All three add answers to the three questions at the end of their stories and finish by lunch time.

Analysis

As Graves (1975) (p. 237) has pointed out, "At any given point in a writing episode, many variables, most of them unknown at the time of composing, contribute to the writing process" and "children write for unique reasons, employing highly individual coping strategies, and view writing in ways peculiar to

their own person . . ." In the above writing episode the group leader (Daniel) was able to divert the group (Gary, Martin and Thomas) from the writing the teacher assigned -- answering the three questions about the Pharoah -- to the much more familiar and comfortable narrative mode -- the stories about the Pharoah hunting hippos, lions and tigers. By beginning a dramatic dialogue with the group, Daniel himself developed a dramatic monologue which acted as a solo discourse sustaining the idea for his own story. He was also able by entering and re-entering the dialogue in the small group to assist Martin, Gary, and Thomas in developing and sustaining their narratives.

Conclusions

The findings reported here are limited to those areas concerned with the developing and sustaining of solo discourse during the pre-writing and composing phases of a writing episode but there is no question that this study also substantiates the previous findings of Graves (1975) that "informal classroom environments" give greater choice to children and that "the results of writing done in the informal environments demonstrate that children do not need motivation or supervision in order to write." (p. 235) One differing finding of the total study with respect to Graves (1975) is that children at this developmental level will write about theses from secondary and extended territory (Secondary territory is defined as the metropolitan area beyond the area beyond the secondary which would include current events,

history and geography on a national and world scale.) if the total theme related to this territory is well understood and comprehensively dealt with in a variety of media and over an extended period of time. This finding relates both to the writing of girls and boys. It is evident also that the organization of the classroom into the study of a few extended themes allows for the development of writing about secondary and extended territory. If the teacher's attitude demonstrates that the knowledge about such themes and writing about secondary and extended territories is valued, the children will be responsive to the teacher's attitude and behavior in this regard. Specific warrented conclusions relating to development of sustained discourse are as follows.

1) Where small writing groups are allowed to work on writing assignments together, group interaction facilitates solo discourse and sustains ideas in the prewriting and composing phases of a writing episode.

2) The nature of group interaction, where groups are allowed to form and work together in a class, provides significant variables in selecting writing modes and affects the understanding and interpretation of assigned writing.

New Research Directions

This researcher agrees with Graves (1975) that there is a need for developmental studies related to childrens' writing. There is also a need for further studies of the influence of classroom organization, specific materials and teacher attitudes as they may be significant variables affecting all aspects of writing episodes including the choice and selection of topics and modes of writing. Direct observation of children of writing using ethnomethological techniques and case study techniques has continuing promise in such research.

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